

PUBLIC HEARING ON TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2006 AT 2:00 P.M., IN ROOM 2B

H. B. NO. 5647 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION CLAIMANTS WITH A DISABILITY

TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

MY NAME IS CLAUDIA FULLERTON. THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY IN SUPPORT OF H. B. NO. 5647 - AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION CLAIMANTS WITH A DISABILITY. I WANT TO ALSO THANK THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR FOR INTRODUCING THIS ACT FOR A PUBLIC HEARING IN THE HOUSE TODAY.

I AM A PERSON WHO LIVES WITH A MENTAL IMPAIRMENT. MY STORY IS NOT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM ANYONE ELSE WHO SUFFERS FROM A BI-POLAR DISORDER. AS FOR THE ILLNESS ITSELF, THERE IS NO CURE. IT MAY BE TRANSMITTED GENETICALLY FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT. I AM THE SECOND GENERATION IN MY FAMILY TO LIVE WITH THIS DISEASE. IN MY CHILDREN'S GENERATION, MY DAUGHTER, HEATHER, WAS BORN DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED.

MY DAUGHTER IS AMONG THE 30% OF THE WORKING AGE ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES WORKING IN A SAFE, SECURE, DIVERSE WORKFORCE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE LAST 17 YEARS. AS AN AGING MOTHER OF AN ADULT WITH A DISABILITY, IT HAS BEEN REWARDING FOR ME TO SEE IN MY LIFE-TIME THAT MY DAUGHTER AT THE AGE OF 36 LIVES AN INDEPENDENT AND PRODUCTIVE LIFE. SHE IS HAPPY BECAUSE SHE GOES TO WORK EVERY DAY. MY DREAM FOR HEATHER HAS BEEN REALIZED.

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I AM ALSO A DISABLED INDIVIDUAL WHO IS A PLAINTIFF IN A SEVEN YEAR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION CASE THAT HAS BEEN SELECTED TO GO BEFORE THE CONNECTICUT SUPREME COURT JUSTICES.

ON APRIL 12, 2005, CONNECTICUT SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE MICHAEL SHELDON (DOCKET NUMBER: HHD-CV-03-0827926-S), FOUND THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR REGULATION VIOLATES A STATE LAW WHICH SAY THAT MENTAL DISABILITY AND PHYSICAL DISABILITY "SHALL NOT BE CONSIDERED AS LIMITING FACTORS IN STATE ADMINISTERED PROGRAMS INVOLVING THE DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS TO QUALIFY APPLICANTS FOR BENEFITS AUTHORIZED BY LAW" (CONN. GEN. STATE 46a-76).

H.B. NO. 5647 WILL PROTECT QUALIFIED DISABLED WORKERS BY MANDATING REASONABLE DIVERSIFICATION RIGHTS IN THE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION OPERATIONS.

YOUR ACTION TO MAKE PASSAGE FOR H. B. NO. 5647 WILL MAKE CORRECT THE MEASURES THAT WOULD GUARANTEE THE FUNDAMENTAL NECESSITIES UNDER THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR REGULATION DEFINITION FOR ME, FOR MY DAUGHTER, FOR OUR VETERANS, AND ALL DISABLED QUALIFY APPLICANTS IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.

THANK YOU FOR LENDING YOUR TIME TO HEAR MY TESTIMONY.

CLAUDIA A. FULLERTON